

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 9807

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (FOR DISTRIBUTION)

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TAGS: PFOR, MARR, PARM, US, XO, IN

SUBJ: AMEMBASSY BANGKOK'S DRAFT PAPER, "THOUGHTS ON
AN INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE"

REF: BANGKOK 11547

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1. AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IS IN THE BEST POSITION TO KNOW WHETHER WE MUST ALLEGE INDO-SOVIET COLLUSION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND INDIAN EXPANSIONISM IF WE ARE TO GET THE THAI GOVERNMENT TO CHANGE ITS MIND ABOUT THE RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS. PERHAPS WE MUST, BUT THEN WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD REASSESS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS OR LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR RECONNAISSANCE BASES. BY MAKING THESE ALLEGATIONS, WE RUN THE RISK OF STIMULATING THAI THINKING ALONG LINES WHICH ARE NEITHER SOUND NOR IN OUR INTEREST.

2. INDO-SOVIET COLLUSION: IT'S TRUE THAT SRI LANKA STARTED THE IDEA OF THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE (IOZP), THAT INDIA HAS SUPPORTED IT, AND THAT INDIA AND THE SOVIET UNION FOUND SOME COMPROMISE LANGUAGE ABOUT IT WHEN BREZHNEV VISITED LAST NOVEMBER. (THEY AFFIRMED THEIR READINESS "TO PARTICIPATE, TOGETHER WITH OTHER STATES CONCERNED ON AN EQUAL BASIS, IN FINDING A FAIR SOLUTION TO THE QUESTION OF MAKING THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE.") WE VIEW INDIA'S IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE IN SUPPORTING THE CEYLONESE PROPOSAL--AND IT STILL LETS SRI LANKA AND OTHER TAKE THE LEAD--AS A NEGATIVE ONE OF KEEPING THE UNITED STATES NAVY OUT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. PARTICULARLY SINCE 1971 THE INDIANS HAVE SEEN THE US NAVY AS THE PRINCIPAL "PROBLEM". WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE INDIANS ARE NO MORE ANXIOUS TO HAVE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE SOVIET FLEET AROUND, AND THAT THEIR PUBLIC PROTESTATIONS AND THEIR OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS COINCIDE IN THEIR EFFORT TO REDUCE THE PRESENCE OF ALL GREAT POWER FLEETS IN THE AREA. IF THE SOVIET UNION IS WILLING TO MAKE A GESTURE TOWARD COOPERATING IN THIS ENDEAVOR, SO MUCH THE BETTER. WE ARE AWARE OF NO BASIS WHATSOEVER FOR ARGUING THAT INDIA IS INTERESTED IN A SHARED CONTROL OF THE INDIAN OCEAN WITH THE SOVIETS. THE INDIANS KNOW THE SOVIETS ARE DISINGENUOUS IN THEIR POSITION ON THE INDIAN OCEAN. MOST PERSONS WE HAVE SPOKEN TO SEE THE LANGUAGE OF THE GANDHI-BREZHNEV COMMUNIQUE AS THE SOVIET WAY OF DUCKING OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE ON THE IOZP ISSUE WITHOUT REALLY COMPROMISING THEIR FREEDOM OF ACTION. THOSE INDIANS WHO FOLLOW THIS PROBLEM IN THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND WHO ARE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT IT TELL US PRIVATELY THEY HAVE LITTLE EXPECTATION THAT THE US AND SOVIET FLEETS CAN BE KEPT OUT OF THE AREA BY THESE DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERS.

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3. IN ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, INDIA HAS TAKEN CARE NOT TO GIVE AMMUNITION TO CRITICS WHO ALLEGE INDIA HAS ALLIED ITSELF WITH THE SOVIETS. ONLY THIS WEEK THE GOI RELEASED THE TEXT OF A DANISH TV INTERVIEW IN WHICH MRS. GANDHI WENT OUT OF HER WAY TO DENY THAT THERE ARE ANY FOREIGN BASES IN INDIA OR THAT INDIA WOULD CONSIDER MAKING THESE AVAILABLE IN THE FUTURE. TO THE BEST OF OUR EVIDENCE,

SHE IS RIGHT. SOVIET SHIPS CALL AT SOME INDIAN PORTS, BUT THEY GO THROUGH THE SAME PROCEDURE AS DO THE FRENCH, BRITISH AND OTHER SHIPS WHICH CALL. THE SOVIETS USED INDIAN AIRFIELDS IN ORDER TO MONITOR SPACE FLIGHTS ON ONE OCCASION, BUT THE INDIANS TELL US THEY WILL INSIST ON AN INDIAN PRESENCE IN ANY SUCH MISSION IN THE FUTURE, AND OTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THEIR STATEMENTS. INDIA'S SELF-IMAGE IS AS AN INDEPENDENT OPERATOR. WE DOUBT IT WILL GO ANY FARTHER WITH THE SOVIETS THAT IT HAS TO. IT SIGNED A TREATY WITH THE SOVIET UNION ONLY WHEN IT FELT ITSELF UNDER A POTENTIAL JOINT SINO-PAKISTANI THREAT IN 1971.

4. INDIAN EXPANSIONISM: IT'S TRUE ALSO THAT EXCLUSION OF THE US AND SOVIET NAVIES FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN WOULD LEAVE INDIA IN A MUCH STRONGER POSITION TO INFLUENCE LITTORAL COUNTRIES. BUT INDIA VIEWS THIS AS A BY-PRODUCT RATHER THAN AN OBJECTIVE. INDIAN STRATEGIC THINKERS, PARTICULARLY FORMER AMBASSADOR TO CHINA PANNIKAR, IN THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY AFTER INDEPENDENCE DID ARGUE THAT INDIA NEEDED TO BECOME AN INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL POWER TO FORESTALL FOREIGN THREATS TO ITS EXISTENCE. BUT INDIA BECAME ALMOST TOTALLY INVOLVED IN PROTECTING ITS LAND FRONTIERS AND HAD LITTLE TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE SEA. IT HAS WORKED HARD SINCE 1972 TO REASSURE THE SMALLER COUNTRIES AMONG ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS THAT IT HAS NO EXPANSIONIST DESIGNS ON THEM. LEAVING ASIDE PAKISTAN, WE NOTE THE RECENT BORDER DEMARCATION AGREEMENTS WITH BANGLADESH AND SRI LANKA AND THE IMPROVEMENT IN INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS WHICH HAS OCCURRED OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS. WE CAN'T SAY WHAT INDIAN POLICY WILL BE IN THE FUTURE. ALMOST CERTAINLY INDIA'S SMALLER NEIGHBORS WILL CONTINUE TO BE LEERY OF INDIAN INTENTIONS COME WHAT MAY. INDIA HAS THE POTENTIAL CAPABILITY AND LATENT ASPIRATIONS TO BECOME AN INDIAN OCEAN POWER IN TIME. BUT NOW NOW. SO FAR AS RIVAL GROUPINGS OF STATES ARE

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CONCERNED, WE SIMPLY REGISTER SKEPTICISM THAT THE TWO DISPARATE COLLECTIONS OF COUNTRIES DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH 8 OF REFTTEL WILL OR CAN BE ORGANIZED INTO ANY COHERENT OR SYSTEMATIC "GROUPS".

5. INDO-US RELATIONS: WITH THE EXCEPTION OF INDIA-PAKISTAN AND PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS, THE SUBCONTINENT APPEARS TO BE ENTERING A PERIOD OF GREATER CONFIDENCE AND EASIER RELATIONSHIPS. WE DOUBT THAT IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO STIR UP SUSPICION. MOREOVER, THE UNITED STATES ITSELF IS MOVING TOWARD A MORE MATURE RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA--A RELATIONSHIP BASED IN PART ON KEEPING OUR CRITICISM OF EACH OTHER IN PRIVATE BILATERAL CHANNELS AND ON RECOGNIZING EACH OTHER'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES--INDIA WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES WITH PAKISTAN AND THAILAND, FOR EXAMPLE. IN THIS

CONTEXT, WE DOUBT IT IS IN OUR INTERESTS TO STIR UP THAI
SUSPICIONS OF INDIAN ACTIVITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND OF
MALIGN INDO-SOVIET PLOTS TO SHARE IN HEGEMONY OVER THE OCEAN
WHICH WE DOUBT CAN BE SUPPORTED IN FACT.

6. WE ARE OURSELVES NOT CLEAR AS TO EXACTLY WHAT THE
OBJECTIVES OF OUR RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS OVER THE INDIAN
OCEAN ARE, HOW FREQUENTLY THEY ARE RUN, AND WHAT OTHER
OPTIONS MAY EXIST FOR CONDUCTING SUCH RECONNAISSANCE.
TEHRAN'S 5975 SUGGESTS WE CONSIDER THE USE OF DIEGO GARCIA
AS WAS DONE LAST FALL. WE WOULD WANT TO THINK ABOUT THIS
AFTER LEARNING MORE OF THE TYPE AND FREQUENCY OF FLIGHTS
WHICH MIGHT BE INVOLVED. CONCEIVABLY COCOS COULD BE USED
PERIODICALLY SINCE AUSTRALIA MAY BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT
"RECONNAISSANCE" OPERATIONS AS WELL AS OTHER TYPES OF MISSIONS
FROM THAT POINT (BANGKOK 11743 AND CANBERRA 4697).
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